

PLAIN Talk

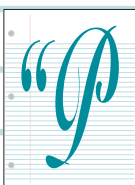
THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING ©

PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

By Craig T. Ramey, Ph.D. and Sharon L. Ramey, Ph.D.

Editor's note:

We are extremely grateful to Sharon and Craig Ramey for giving permission to reprint four chapters from their book, *Going To School*. This newsletter is the third of a four part series. *Going to School* and its companion book, *Right From Birth*, are available in the A+ store on CDL's website at www.cdl.org.



arent involvement" is a hot topic in education, partly because many parents are not involved enough. Research shows that when parents are more involved, their children generally do better in school. Involved parents enhance what their children learn in the classroom. Involved parents

also tend to be better organized in daily life.

Parent involvement also is beneficial for parents. Parents who do something extra for their child, their child's classroom, or their child's school or school district have the satisfaction of seeing benefits and the thanks of smiling faces. Involved parents invariably hear about problems early and are in the best position to take action and to enact good solutions. Involved parents are also frequently in touch with other parents, sharing useful information and working to ensure that their children get a world-class education and a lifetime of good school memories.



CAN CHILDREN DO WELL IN SCHOOL IF THEIR PARENTS ARE NOT VERY INVOLVED?

Yes and no. Yes, because highly effective teachers will engage your child's mind, promote new skills, reward learning, and encourage continued intellectual growth. No, because school is only part of your child's educational life. If you are not generally well-informed about what is happening in the classroom and school, and if you do not actively expand your child's learning opportunities, your child will miss out on some valuable extracurricular experiences. Happily, most parents have a great deal to offer their children that counts as parent involvement.

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CDL'S MISSION

To improve the life chances of all children, especially those at high risk, by increasing school success.

CDL'S GOAL

To help all children learn to higher levels and apply their knowledge toward good ends.

CDL'S OBJECTIVE

Activate and achieve sweeping systemic change in the way children are taught.

CDL'S CORE BELIEF

All children are born with an innate desire to learn, all children can learn to higher levels, and all children deserve equal opportunities to a solid education.

CDL'S VISION

The very special uniqueness of every child will be identified, respected, honored, and celebrated.

CALL TO ACTION

Only an informed public can make informed decisions that lead to clear and focused action that will ensure a solid and equitable education for all children. When you have finished reading this newsletter, please share it with a teacher, a parent, another professional who works with children, or a community/business leader.

Contact CDL for more information about our programs and/or how you can help Contact information: 208 South Tyler St., Covington, LA 70433; (985) 893-7777 (main); (504) 897-2211 (New Orleans); Email: learn@cdl.org PLAINTalk is published quarterly by the Center for Development and Learning (CDL). TM and © All rights reserved. Articles may be photocopied for educational purposes with permission and with the following credit:

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Alice Thomas, editor; Debbi Smith, designer
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HOW ARE WE DOING?

Falling test scores among students, and the low academic standing of American students compared to those of other countries (as measured by children's performance on standardized achievement tests) are complex matters that warrant attention and resolution. Media coverage has raised parental awareness of these problems. However, these national trends provide little information to parents about how their own children are doing and how well their schools are contributing to their child's lifelong education.



In fact, survey after survey of middle-class families across the country shows an interesting finding: Parents think other schools (or schools in general) are having problems, but they believe their own schools are pretty good.

Further, most children are doing quite well in school and learning a great deal. This reflects the fact that parents and teachers are helping children, often in a cooperative and coordinated fashion. Whether this represents the best it can be for children and families, however, is not known. Almost all educators and parents have worthwhile ideas for how things can be improved.

The relationship between parents and teachers is another subject of debate and concern. This relationship is often characterized in the media as ambivalent or accusatory. Teachers may blame parents when children's behavior, learning habits, or preparation for school are poor. And parents may be concerned that teachers are not doing as good a job as they should be. Whenever teacher competencies are measured in a systematic way, too many teachers fall short of the mark.

At times, parents and teachers can pose problems for each other. But it is wrong to interpret occasional blame to mean that parents and schools are not working effectively to benefit children. In our research, we find parents and teachers overwhelmingly report that they like, respect, and value each other.

In short, the alarms raised about education in this country can be misleading. Yes, problems arise, but there are many ways parents can intervene on their children's behalf. Just as important, parents can work to make things better by contributing ideas to the teacher, the principal, the parent teacher organization, and the school board. Most schools offer ample opportunity for parents to get involved to support teachers and schools.

We offer guidelines about different ways of becoming involved and how to be sure that your child and your child's teacher know you are involved. Remember, parent involvement in education begins long before elementary school starts, and continues through the end of high school and into the college years.



➔ *Involvement cont'd. on page 3.*

WHAT IS "PARENT INVOLVEMENT"?

Parents can be involved in their child's education in many ways. Dr. James Comer of Yale University describes three levels of parent involvement with schools:

1. General participation, the most common form, in which parents respond to teacher requests and participate in school-sponsored activities, including open houses, parent-teacher conferences, school fairs, and performances.
2. Sponsoring school programs and helping in the classroom is a more active form in which parents contribute time and other resources directly to benefit the classroom and school.
3. Participating in school governance in elective or appointed roles. This typically involves a large time commitment. Along the way, parents learn a great deal about how schools function and the problems they face.

In addition to making their views known, involved parents also bring a fresh perspective to education and often contribute needed expertise in areas such as business, health, the arts, sports, the law, and diverse cultures and languages. Obviously, not all parents can or need to assume more active roles, although schools and children benefit immensely when they do.

When parents pay attention and show genuine interest in their child's well-being in school, they are well-positioned to know what's going on, to anticipate problems, and to resolve issues early. They also can better judge what kinds of activities at home will support and enhance what is happening at school. Such parents naturally reinforce the value and fun of learning and working to succeed.

Parent involvement does not require - or ensure - perfection. Not every school day will be reported as wonderful, exciting, and trouble-free, although most should be. The inevitable problems can be valuable opportunities for your child to acquire problem-solving skills - a big part of what school is supposed to teach.

Parent involvement of the right kind allows children to know that their parents are aware of, and care about, what is happening at school. Appropriately involved parents also know that children need some independence and privacy, and that school is primarily the child's experience.

As you make choices about your type and level of involvement, realize that the world of school may have changed a lot since you were in elementary school. Teachers' expectations for parent involvement will be greater and more specific; the diverse parent-sponsored activities at school are likely to have increased; and almost all educators have come into alignment with the national educational goal that, "All schools will increase parent involvement."

THE RIGHT BALANCE OF "PARENT INVOLVEMENT"

In considering your involvement, know that it is likely to be a daily endeavor. You will have many choices about the responsibilities you assume. Be realistic about what is possible. For some parents, being a classroom "parent" or planning the school fundraiser is feasible. Others who would like to do this but don't have the time can consider sharing the role. What no parent should abdicate, however, is daily involvement in [his/her] children's school experience.

Schools expect that parents will regularly stay in touch with teachers and offer support for learning and schooling. This means reading the notes and newsletters that come home, talking with your child about each day, reading with your child every day, and helping with special projects and/or skill development, such as practicing spelling, or writing stories. Parents who travel or are not always available need to be creative in fulfilling their obligations. Having friends, other relatives, or talented baby sitters pitch in occasionally is just fine.

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Can a parent be too involved? When parents make their child's schooling the center of their universe, and have a disproportionate amount of family life revolve around the child's school progress, then parental involvement may be getting out of hand. This helps no one. Similarly, daily visits or calls, or extensive notes to the teacher are overdoing it (unless a special issue is being worked out). Balance is essential.

You may also be overdoing it if you feel overwhelmed, exhausted, or frustrated with your level of involvement. Check with other parents whose children are in the same classroom. If a teacher's expectations are unrealistic, parents should work with the teacher to resolve the problem. Alternatively, perhaps you are taking a teacher's suggestions too literally or too far. You don't need to carefully study every piece of work your child brings home.

Finally, if your child shows frequent signs of distress at your school-related activities, take stock. Are you remembering to spend time with your child doing other activities and just having fun? Without meaning to, are you placing undue pressure on your child to achieve at the highest level at all times? Are you mistiming your activities, maybe when your child is tired, hungry, or in need of a hug or vigorous play?

What is too little involvement? When parents do not create time to read notes from the teacher, review what a child brings home, or attend parent activities at school, the child is likely to suffer. Very young children cannot remember that this is the week to bring in something for "the letter D," the topic of autumn, or something with the color red to help with a class activity. They also cannot be expected to reliably remember which days school ends early, or when parents need to return a signed permission slip so they may go on a field trip. When parents do not meet these obligations, their children are

embarrassed and often become detached and sometimes are prevented from participating. This can happen in families from all walks of life. Being a parent who is constructively involved in your child's education takes commitment, forethought, and time. All parents can do this well, if they are open to suggestions (especially from their child, the teacher, and other parents).

Some parents are understandably frustrated if they think the school has become excessively demanding. Your child, however, cannot be the mediator or asked to join sides. Please keep your criticisms away from very young children's ears and seek effective ways to resolve the situation.

Finally, some parents may think that the schools are "babying" their child by requesting parents to spend so much time on school-related activities at home. This is particularly true for parents who have no recollection of their own parents

(your child's grandparents) spending so much time helping with schoolwork in the early years. There is little research on how much and what types of parent involvement are best for children at different levels. Good parent involvement always fosters a child's self-initiative and responsibility in learning and performance. Parent involvement does not mean that parents do the children's work. Rather, it is a way for parents to compliment and extend the learning that occurs at school.

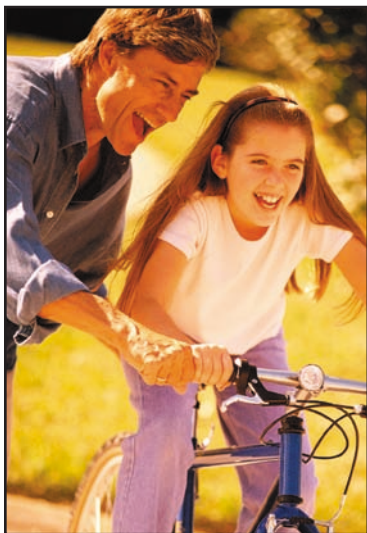
WHY HAS PARENT INVOLVEMENT BECOME SO IMPORTANT?

Twenty-five years ago, most teachers did not make suggestions to parents about what to do at home, nor did most parents interfere with (or even know about) what went on in the classroom. While this may have been easier, it also was true that too many children had unpleasant early school experiences and no help from parents to improve things.

Teachers and parents today are expected to communicate openly, frequently, and effectively. Today's teachers now take college courses about families and how to invite and accept parent involvement. Why the change? We think there are at least three reasons:

- Everyone wants all children to do well and fit in. Keeping parents informed is one way to ensure that everyone is working to achieve these results. Also, classrooms now serve a much greater mix of children, including children with disabilities and special health-care needs. Information for parents of a child with special needs can be vital in optimizing the child's school adjustment.
- The education world has become more legalistic. Schools want to be sure that children are safe, that they will report "accurate" information about what is going on in the classroom, and that they experience continuity between home and school. Schools also want to prevent acrimony and avoid lawsuits. Frequent communication is one way to prevent misunderstandings.
- There is a great deal of evidence that children whose parents spend time at home helping to strengthen, review, and extend what is taught in the classroom do better on measures of academic achievement. Teacher-parent communication is essential if parents are to provide the right types of support at home. Also, as teachers change what they do in the classroom, parent-teacher communication keeps parents up to date.

The extra communication can be time-consuming, but the benefits are substantial. Let your child's teachers and school administrators know what you like or don't like about the communication you have. Are you getting too much or not enough information? Do you have suggestions for improving communication? Perhaps you have ideas based on your experience in the workplace or your child's preschool. If so, share these. Your input is likely to be welcomed.



HOW TO MONITOR THE QUALITY OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCE.

Monitoring your child's education is the cornerstone of parent involvement. Every aspect of parent involvement is geared to providing the best schooling possible for your child, and you can't do this if you don't know what's going on. Yet we know of no topic more difficult to cover than this one, for two reasons. First, parents cannot be everywhere, and you will not know everything that happens to your child.



Second, there is no clear consensus about what constitutes a "quality" education. There are many strongly held, divergent opinions about the most important aspects of a child's educational experience. This is why school choice has become such an important topic. That said, there are several useful ways that parents can gauge whether their young children are receiving a high-quality education.

1. Evaluate What You See in Your Child and the School.

- Is my child showing evidence of learning a lot about many topics?
- Does my child appear to be interested in and eager to share what is happening at school? (Beware: Don't just rely on your child's response to "How was school today?")
- Are books and other educational materials and activities challenging for my child?
- Does my child have many opportunities to succeed in ways that are meaningful and represent advances in skills and knowledge?
- Does the classroom provide different ways for students to be actively engaged in the learning process?
- When I go to school, are there visible signs of children's work that reflect learning? Artwork is fine, but there should be other products as well.
- Does the school seek to engage parents in promoting learning at home? If so, are the instructions to parents clear and useful? And do the recommended activities seem worthwhile, rather than rote exercises that are not fun or interesting?
- Do all or almost all of the children seem engaged and happy when I visit the classroom? (Note: This refers to typical classroom times, not to special events like parties, performances, or field trips.)

2. Talk to Your Child.

Children are remarkably apt reporters of their own classroom experiences. They also can provide a fairly trustworthy account of whether they are learning new things and whether school is interesting to them. Be sure to talk with your child about school. This goes far beyond the daily probe of "What happened in school today?" which yields a highly variable response from many children, ranging from the stereotypical "Nothing" and "I don't remember" to lengthy discourses about what really happened.

Research studies indicate that children are far better about revealing information that is true and reflects important dimensions of their experience when they are not quizzed directly with questions that call for expected answers. The style that works the best with young children involves a dialogue in which topics are introduced in a general, sometimes indirect, manner, followed by clear probes and specific comments to anchor and guide the discussion.

Because it is a dialogue, parents will join in, sharing their own ideas, describing relevant experiences, and asking for clarification or elaboration of what their child has shared. There are no right or wrong answers. And it's important to avoid strong judgments, since these are likely to shorten or end the dialogue. Also, try not to redirect your child's conversation so that only certain things are shared while others are hidden or denied. Don't try to control the dialogue (even if you do initiate it). But also don't be a passive listener.

Beyond the dialogue, you can have constructive conversations that will tell you a lot. Ask open-ended questions that encourage your child to tell you how things could get even better at school:

"What would you do if you were in charge of things at school?" (Followed closely with "And would this help you do better in school?")

"Can you think of something really good that could make school even better for you?"

"What is the best way to help children like you learn?"

"What do other children in the class think about the way [teacher's name] teaches ?



3. *Communicate With Teachers and Other School Personnel.*

You need more than your child's view about school to effectively monitor what's happening. You need the perspective of teachers and school personnel. In getting their views, four things are vitally important in how you communicate - clarity, brevity, timeliness, and sensitivity.

Clarity: Convey your message clearly. There are many ways messages can get garbled and misread. One is poor handwriting. Teachers tell us that they get a lot of notes that are hard to decipher. Write neatly (just as your child is being told to!) or type your message. Avoid using jargon, slang, and extreme statements.

Make sure your meaning is clear. Some parents are so busy being polite, clever, or accomplished in their written notes that they don't make their point. Ask someone else to read or listen to what you've written. Likewise, if you are going to meet with your child's teacher or principal, jot down your thoughts and, if necessary, practice what you intend to say. Make sure your practice partner understands your message.

Brevity: Teachers have many parents, students, and issues to deal with. Be brief and to the point.

Timeliness: Good communication is a two-way street. When teachers and school personnel ask or need something from you, give them the response they need when they need it.

Being on time reflects your consideration for the teacher and the school, as well as your organizational skills. There will be many times when parents need to respond to a query, sign a note or progress report, turn in a reading list, or return a signed permission slip by a specified date. Mark it on a calendar (or two!). Leave yourself reminders. Be on time. Better yet, be early.

If you won't be able to respond on time, send a note or contact the person ahead of time to explain why. Remember, the teacher or school is responsible for bringing together information from many parents, not just from you. Even if a



request concerns only your child, there probably is a reason why the teacher or school wants a timely answer. Show that you care by not being late. This also sets a good example for your child about completing schoolwork on time.

Much as we encourage parents to deal with issues

promptly and early, we also encourage you to think about whether some matters can wait and might resolve themselves in a day or two. Selecting the right time, as well as being clear



and brief, can make a big difference in how effective your communication is.

Remember that every communication need not be about your child, you, or your child's classroom. If you see an interesting article about education, want to offer to do something extra for the school (plant a garden, freshen up a mural in the hallway, create a new parent mentoring program for kindergarten next year), speak up! Share!

What better way to be seen as a supporter and a contributor, one who is responsive, responsible, and ready to help?

Sensitivity: Be considerate. Think about what would be the best way to convey your message - informally in person? in a written note? in a planned meeting? Don't waste a big meeting on a small item. And don't try to deal with an important subject on the fly. The setting and timing of your message matters. Running into the classroom just before class to discuss an important topic with your child's teacher is inconsiderate and generally counterproductive.

Manners count. Be diplomatic. Avoid accusations or laments. Be open to other people's points of view and additional information. If you are in the wrong, acknowledge the fact promptly and openly. And remember to thank the teacher and others for their time and thoughtfulness, even if the problem is not immediately resolved or if uncertainties remain.

Include upbeat and encouraging words in your communication as well as the problems. Express appreciation appropriately (not through excessive gifts or words that might easily be misinterpreted). But also don't be afraid to let the teacher or principal know when things aren't going right.



Some teachers now routinely share their home phone numbers with parents; others still choose not to (and may have unlisted phone numbers). Those who give their home number often tell parents under what conditions to call. Please respect these wishes. Also, teachers usually tell parents when they have free time for consultations. Record this information early in the school year.

4. *Talk to Your Child's Friends and Their Parents.*

Ask your child's class friends what they think about what's happening in the classroom and at school. Ditto for talking with other parents, including those with children in this year's class and those whose children previously had the same teacher. In a good educational setting, almost all of the children will have positive experiences - not just your child or a few

children, and certainly not just children at the “top” or the “bottom” of the learning curve.

As you get to know other parents, an effective way of eliciting their honest opinions is to avoid leading questions such as “Isn’t [teacher’s name] a great teacher?” or “Are you upset [worried, concerned, angry, frustrated, confused, irritated] about what is happening at [name of school or name of classroom]?” Instead, begin the conversation with queries like “How do you think things are going this year for [the name of the parent’s child]?” or “What do you especially notice about the way [teacher’s name] handles the class?” If you discover that other parents are seeing things differently, investigate further.

Finally, be sure to reflect on your goals for your child. What do you want for your child in life? How do you see the role of the school in achieving these goals? This should help you to evaluate whether the school is engaged in a collaborative partnership with you and your child. Look beyond rhetoric. Go beyond what the school brochures and the principal say. Pay attention to the everyday things that happen, little and big, because these represent the true substance of your child’s school experience.

THE MANY WAYS PARENTS CAN (AND SHOULD) SUPPORT SCHOOLS.

Schools are vital to our communities and our society. While parent involvement directly helps your child, it also strengthens the school. Ideally, at the end of each school year, parents should be able to look back and identify specific things they have done to leave their child’s school a better place.

Help the school personnel feel appreciated. Every parent can provide thank-you notes, cards for holidays, and individual or class presents (modest, but thoughtful ones are best). Do not limit your show of appreciation to just the classroom teacher. If there are regular classroom assistants or special resource teachers, thank them as well. What about someone who went the extra mile for your child in the lunchroom or playground? Thank him and tell the principal, too. Nominate a great teacher for a Teacher of the Year Award. The time it takes to keep school personnel feeling good for their hard work is small compared to the benefits it reaps.

Are there tangible contributions you can make during the

year? Some schools have fundraisers in which you can participate. This counts! Just as important, you may can help to repair something, to decorate something, or to donate something to the class or school. Contribute your time. Some of the busiest parents make time to volunteer in their child’s classroom or school. You can accompany children on a field trip, make phone calls to share important information, come to the classroom and read to children, or help with a special project.



Teachers usually make requests to parents about their needs, or you can ask the teacher how to make something happen. What about doing a special show-and-tell session for the children? This is especially helpful if the topic is connected to other learning activities occurring at school. Even routine work, such as

addressing envelopes, filing papers, or helping the librarian or media center director put new labels or cards in books is valuable. Chances are, you will enjoy this volunteer time and your child will be proud of you for doing it.

Talk constructively with other parents about the school and its direction. This is another form of supporting your child’s school. Sharing information is valuable, and it means that more parents are able to cooperate to strengthen their child’s school. Don’t think that your child’s “good school” can’t get better. Parents at some of our country’s premiere schools are the most active in seeking improvement.

Take a leadership role or complete a major project. Only a small percentage of parents can do this each year, but if you do so at least once every four years, you will be a true agent of change. It is such sharing of leadership responsibility for schools (and in other areas -the workplace, organized religion, political organizations, community activities), that makes a democracy strong and successful. Even if you have limited time and energy, attending a public hearing or a parents’ planning meeting may allow you to offer a valuable perspective or creative idea that others may act on.

FORMAL PARENT ORGANIZATIONS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AND DO.

The traditional PTA (Parent Teacher Association) has been transformed in many places. New names include Parent Teacher Organization or Parent Teacher Student Organization. Some groups have their own names. Some are affiliated with



Involvement cont'd. from page 7.

regional and national groups. You will definitely be invited to join. Read the invitation and ask other parents about it. Many schools pride themselves in having 100 percent parent participation.

These groups organize and energize parent talent for schools. They also fulfill an important role of challenging schools, seeking information about what's happening and why, expressing concern about changes that are not optimal (at least on the surface), and lobbying with the school board or state government about important matters. These organizations can be inspirational, bringing in new ideas through a speaker series, a newsletter, or creating a parent resource room at the school.

These associations often respond to parents' schedules and preferences. Some meet in the evening, others during the day. Some raise money, while others concentrate on a wide range of activities. Most change over the years as school needs and family needs change.

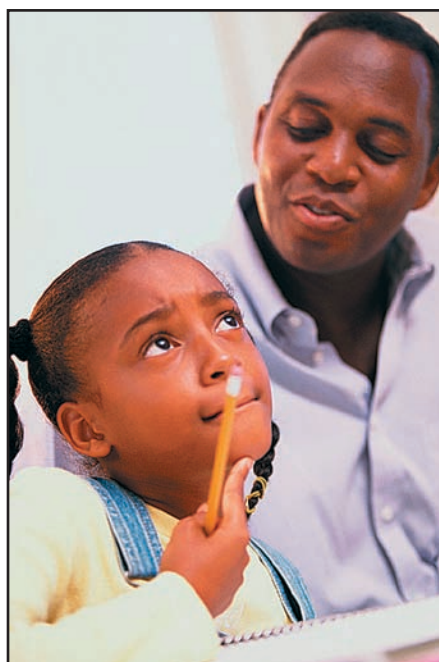
HOW PARENT INVOLVEMENT MAY SHIFT WITH YOUR CHILD'S GRADE AND TEACHER.

Some parents just get parent involvement down pat for the kindergarten class when they encounter a first-grade teacher with very different rules and expectations. Then along comes a second-grader who ups the ante or changes the parameters again. You, like your child, will need to be flexible and open to benefiting from change. Below are a few guidelines about the increasing expectations that come with your child's promotion through the elementary school grades:

Homework: Earlier grades expect less time per day to be spent on traditional homework activities. However, the requests for daily reading plus regular sleep habits may make the early grades not seem much easier for parents than the later grades. In a recent national survey, parents reported that children's time spent doing homework more than doubled between first few years in school and fifth or sixth grade.

Schools vary a lot about their homework policies over the weekends and over school holidays. Fortunately, whatever your child has to do, so do the other children. This helps parents in supervising their child's use of study time. As children get older, they can study with other classmates, but this is not likely to be effective in the first three years of elementary school. There may be some exceptions, such as rehearsing for a play or concert, or having a pretend spelling bee.

Independence: By the second grade, teachers expect greater child independence in



completing assigned tasks. Your role will be more supervisory compared to kindergarten and first grade when almost all homework requires your direct participation.

Tests: Formal tests and projects will increase. It is important for your child's well-being that you pay attention to the dates of tests and when projects are due. Children this young do not need calendars and electronic organizers,

but you may!

Study space: The need for a child's own study space will increase tremendously from kindergarten through the end of second grade. If at all possible, have both family spaces and a private space where your child can study.

Supplies: The variety of supplies you will need for homework and learning activities will increase with the years. Have your child help select them. Personalize them in ways that help your child to be responsible for them. This is excellent preparation for the continuing academic demands your child will encounter.

THOUGHTS ON WHAT PARENT INVOLVEMENT MEANS FOR YOUR FAMILY.

Beyond all you are already doing for your child, going to school will present a new set of demands. To some extent, you must forge a partnership with your child's school and the key players if your child is to benefit fully from the school experience. As with any good partnership, attempts to gain total control on one side or the other are likely to be useless and counterproductive.

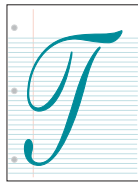
Schools are reaching out to parents more than ever - inviting participation in new and exciting ways, as well as in traditional ways. Participate fully and with good cheer. Make your wishes known, give



→ *Involvement cont'd. on page 10.*



STAY CONNECTED WITH CDL



The Center for Development and Learning (CDL) is a results-driven private nonprofit organization specializing in the

development and dissemination of leading edge research, knowledge, and best practices from multiple disciplines that impact educational success.

CDL's programs and services assist children, their families, their teachers, schools, universities, and businesses and the community by:

- mobilizing public engagement (e.g., summits, newsletters, information-rich website).
- delivering comprehensive research-based professional development (e.g., training for teachers, principals and other professionals).

- providing direct services for children and their families (e.g., evaluations, consultations, counseling).

"To my knowledge, CDL is the only organization worldwide working to connect knowledge from the medical, psychological, educational and judicial fields to multiply the benefits to children," states Michael Fullan, dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Ensuring that all of our children develop, learn, and thrive to the maximum extent possible is a monumental, yet attainable task. And you can help. By joining CDL, you will be helping us impact student success – one child, one classroom, one school at a time. Here's what you will receive in return:

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Involvement cont'd. from page 8.

your creativity free reign, and expect occasional imperfections and inconsistencies on your part and the school's. But most of all, be a player. If you do, you will be able to look back on wonderful experiences that enriched your child, the school, and your community.

Chapter Three from Going To School was reprinted with permission of the authors.

Craig Ramey is a Distinguished Professor in Health Studies and the Founding Director, along with Sharon Ramey, of the Center on Health and Education. His research has focused on the effects of the early experience on children's intellectual and social competence. He developed and continues to lead the Abecedarian Project. He has also studied the effects of early intervention for premature, low birth weight children. Recently he completed a 31-site study mandated by Congress, known as the Head Start-Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project. Ramey serves actively as an advisor to many national initiatives in early childhood, including advising the First Lady Laura Bush on a series of parenting booklets and President Bush and his leadership team about the importance of early experience on brain and behavioral development. He has received many national awards, including the American Psychological Association Award for

Exemplary Prevention Programs, the Howard Heflin Award for Contributions to World Health and Education (2000), the Children's Advocate Award (2002) and was named to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's "Hall of Honor" (2003). Dr. Ramey is a member of the CDL Professional Advisory Board.

Sharon Ramey is the Susan Mayer Professor in Child and Family Studies and the Founding Director, along with Craig Ramey, of the Center on Health and Education. Her research has focused on the effects of the environment on behavior, including longitudinal studies of the effects of early experience on the development of children "at risk" for mental retardation and school failure; work on the behavioral effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol, nicotine, and cocaine; studies on the dynamic changes affecting American families; research on the social ecology of residential and educational settings for individuals with mental retardation; and a recent study on the transition to school, including 8,000 former Head Start children and families and 3,000 other classmates and their families. Ramey has received many national awards, including the Howard Heflin Award for Contributions to World Health and Education (2000), the American Association on Mental Retardation's Distinguished Research Contributions Award (2000), and the Children's Advocate Award (2002). ††

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10

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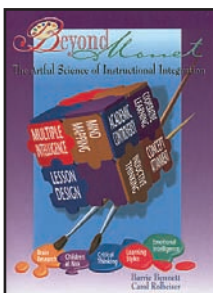
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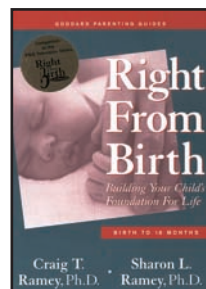
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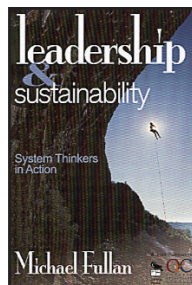
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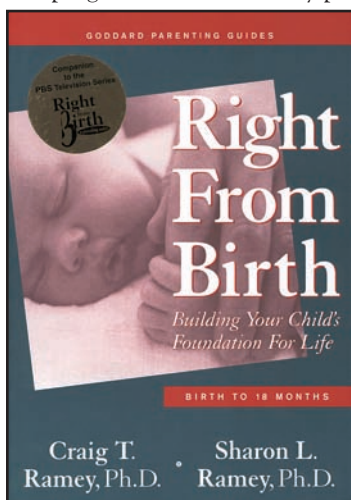
For over a decade, the Center for Development and Learning (CDL) has endeavored to support public education by providing programs and services to assist children, their families, teachers, schools, and universities.

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act and the related mandated programs for parental involvement - a very important facet of the education of our children - CDL has expanded its parental involvement efforts.

In Spring 2004, CDL joined with New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS), Dr. Craig Ramey of Georgetown University's Center on Health and Education, the Rockhold Center for Child Development and LSU Health Sciences Center to deliver a pilot program of the Right From Birth Parenting Series. Working hand in hand, the group successfully delivered the program and is currently planning the program expansion.

Other districts and individual schools seeking to implement the same program may desire assistance with planning, training, or managing the program as it is delivered. CDL is uniquely poised to deliver these services.

The Right From Birth and Going To School Parenting Series are built around weekly parenting workshop sessions. A highly trained facilitator is used to deliver the program using high



quality materials, activities, and instructional and facilitative strategies.

CDL services for the professional development of trainers for the program include:

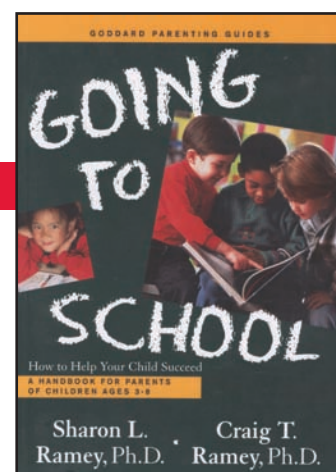
- Recruiting, interviewing and selecting trainers
- Content training
- Facilitation training, including how to increase parental engagement
- Preparation of training materials customized to meet the unique needs of each program venue including suggested session agendas, interactive activities and their necessary materials, handouts, and procedural documents for data collection.

For program delivery and management, CDL offers varying levels of support depending on the needs of the program sponsor, including:

- Preliminary planning, including financial and manpower budgeting
- Site selection and session logistics for the program, activities and childcare
- Parent recruitment and techniques that encourage consistent attendance
- Trainer support and troubleshooting
- Data and documentation systems and management.

To learn more about these and other services provided by CDL, please call or email Julie McCarble, Vice-President of Administration, at (985) 893-7777 or jmccbl@cdl.org.

For data analysis and program evaluation, call or email Billy Stokes, Executive Director of the Rockhold Center, at (225) 763-5440 or bstok1@lsuhsc.edu. **††**



PLAIN *Talk*

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING ©

OCTOBER 2004

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